

#E1-1740
RG

Proposed abandonment of historic BNSF rail line connecting Oklahoma City Union Station to Will Rogers Airport and southwestern Oklahoma is unacceptable

Comment Date: November 2, 2005

Regarding: Surface Transportation Board
STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 430X)

We oppose the abandonment of the historic BNSF (originally St. Louis - San Francisco) rail line linking the Oklahoma City Union Station rail yard to Will Rogers Airport, the FAA / Mike Monroney Center and cities along that route from Wheatland / Mustang to Lawton-Ft. Sill, Altus-Altus Air Force Base and Quanah, Texas.

It is entirely plain that this abandonment proceeding is being driven, NOT by any real or overriding need of the railroad companies operating it, but under great pressure from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) which desires to replace the Union Station rail yard with a new urban expressway.

Claims by the BNSF and Stillwater Central Railroad (SLWC) Companies that no traffic has moved over the line for at least two years are manifestly false. The rail on the old Frisco line through Union Station is shiny from regular use today. Reliable observers report daily movement of at least one SLWC train from east to west and back from west to east over this line each day to switch cement plants and other business located southwest of Union Station.

While claims are made that other routes are available for traffic presently handled by this line, it is plain that the substitute lines are of lower quality, especially as regards grade crossing safety.

In today's liability, litigation and security environment, what railroad company serious about grade crossing safety would, entirely of its own considerations, petition for abandonment of long-standing, entirely functional overpasses of arterial street traffic in a dense urban environment in favor of at-grade crossings on those same streets? The answer is as certain as the absurdity of the question.

ODOT's claims that "rail traffic on the new BNSF / SLWC main will be light" are called into much question in light of surging demand for rail services driven by uncertain motor fuel prices.

If ODOT gets its way in this case (and this abandonment petition is clearly much more "ODOT's" than "BNSF / SLWC's"), users of the arterial Robinson and Walker corridors from south Oklahoma City to downtown will face interruptions by at-grade rail traffic for the first time in 75 years. It is an entirely unacceptable endangerment of the public to no good end.

We urge the Surface Transportation Board to reject this abandonment. For purposes of safety, mobility and future multimodal transportation options, the current BNSF alignment through Union Station is very close to "optimum" as it stands today. Allowing the deliberate destruction of this irreplaceable, high-quality facility by a state agency distinguished only by its inerrant record of massive debt creation makes no sense at all.

Warren Reidler (405) 840-6658
2631 N.W. 56TH, OKC, OK 73112
Linda Yeung 2532 Trigg Dr Del City OK 73115
3616 N.W. 70th
OKLA. CITY, OK 73116 (405) 463-0328

Proposed abandonment of historic BNSF rail line connecting Oklahoma City Union Station to Will Rogers Airport and southwestern Oklahoma is unacceptable

Comment Date: November 2, 2005

Regarding: Surface Transportation Board
STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 430X)

We oppose the abandonment of the historic BNSF (originally St. Louis - San Francisco) rail line linking the Oklahoma City Union Station rail yard to Will Rogers Airport, the FAA / Mike Monroney Center and cities along that route from Wheatland / Mustang to Lawton-Ft. Sill, Altus-Altus Air Force Base and Quanah, Texas.

It is entirely plain that this abandonment proceeding is being driven, NOT by any real or overriding need of the railroad companies operating it, but under great pressure from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) which desires to replace the Union Station rail yard with a new urban expressway.

Claims by the BNSF and Stillwater Central Railroad (SLWC) Companies that no traffic has moved over the line for at least two years are manifestly false. The rail on the old Frisco line through Union Station is shiny from regular use today. Reliable observers report daily movement of at least one SLWC train from east to west and back from west to east over this line each day to switch cement plants and other business located southwest of Union Station.

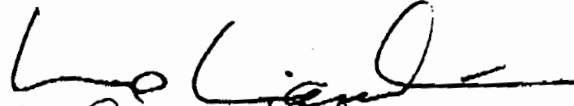

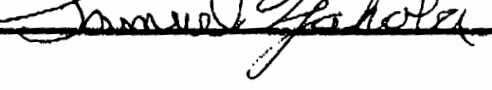
While claims are made that other routes are available for traffic presently handled by this line, it is plain that the substitute lines are of lower quality, especially as regards grade crossing safety.

In today's liability, litigation and security environment, what railroad company serious about grade crossing safety would, entirely of its own considerations, petition for abandonment of long-standing, entirely functional overpasses of arterial street traffic in a dense urban environment in favor of at-grade crossings on those same streets? The answer is as certain as the absurdity of the question.

ODOT's claims that "rail traffic on the new BNSF / SLWC main will be light" are called into much question in light of surging demand for rail services driven by uncertain motor fuel prices.

If ODOT gets its way in this case (and this abandonment petition is clearly much more "ODOT's" than "BNSF / SLWC's"), users of the arterial Robinson and Walker corridors from south Oklahoma City to downtown will face interruptions by at-grade rail traffic for the first time in 75 years. It is an entirely unacceptable endangerment of the public to no good end.

We urge the Surface Transportation Board to reject this abandonment. For purposes of safety, mobility and future multimodal transportation options, the current BNSF alignment through Union Station is very close to "optimum" as it stands today. Allowing the deliberate destruction of this irreplaceable, high-quality facility by a state agency distinguished only by its inerrant record of massive debt creation makes no sense at all.

 (BRUNO BIANCHINI, OKC, OK)
 6601 S. Phillips, OKC-73144
 6601 S. PHILLIPS, OKC, OK-73144